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To the Central Crater of Mt. Etna

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Mt. Etna is a volcano, whose danger rather lies in lateral eruptions than in central eruptions. Due to this, the central crater can be visited in calm periods. The central craters of Etna are La Voragine (3.253m) and Bocca Nuova (3.250m). They are only by a wall, which height reaches approx. 3.321m at its highest point. Just north of the central crater is the Northeast Crater (3.317m), which should mark the highest point of Etna actually. And finally is south of the central crater the Southeast Crater approximately 3.100m high. But in short: the height of the central structures of this volcano is constantly changing. The last (Oct-Dec 2002) eruptions will have changed the face of Etna quite a lot again.

The tour described here leads to the eastern rim of the Voragine. As you will have to pass the NE Crater and are rather near the active Bocca Nuova, this tour can be very dangerous at times. Make sure the probability for strong eruptions of this volcano is very low before you start.

Photos: [South wall of NE Crater](#), [Starting point: the Osservatorio](#), [A Lavatunnel](#), [inside a Lavatunnel](#), [an old lateral crater](#)



Rating:
+++++

ascent: **1.450m** or 450m
Start: **Piano Provenzana, 1.820m** or **Osservatorio Etneo, 2.813**

Destination: **Central Crater, Voragine, 3.253m**

Difficulty: low

Hiking

descent: **1.450m** End: **Piano Provenzana**

Walking Time: (from Osservatorio) total 4,5 hours, 1h to the intersection road, 3.104m, 0,5h to the east rim of Voragine. Descent 3h to Piano Provenzana

Directions:

Either you've walked to the road intersection at 2.789m, where the roads to the crater and the road to the osservatorio meet the road to Piano Provenzana or you took a road from S.T.A.R. to the Osservatorio and saved 1.000m of altitude - for 35 EURO. Anyway, from this intersection you simply follow the road, which leads ESE for a while and then you reach the intersection of the road with the trail at 3.104m. Follow the trail straight E towards the saddle between NE Crater and Central Crater. Already from the intersection you usually hear the loud roars of the volcano, the more you proceed on the trail, the more you'll begin to literally feel the volcano's activity. Below the saddle you'll have to expect gas emissions, which should not be inhaled. A piece of cloth will not help much, so leave this area quickly. Once you arrived at the saddle, you'll see to your right the Central Crater (Voragine), south of it - behind a wall - the Bocca Nuova. To your left is the S-wall of the NE Crater. Passing this saddle has been the most dangerous part of our tour in 2002. Eruptions from the NE Crater will lead to rock fall right on the saddle. If this occurs, don't run away, as you will not see the danger in your back. Look to the source of danger and be ready to take cover. After this saddle you'll arrive at the lower part of the E-rim of Voragine. In its lower part gas emissions occurred, too. Decide on your own how far you want to go. Make sure you'll have a safe way back.

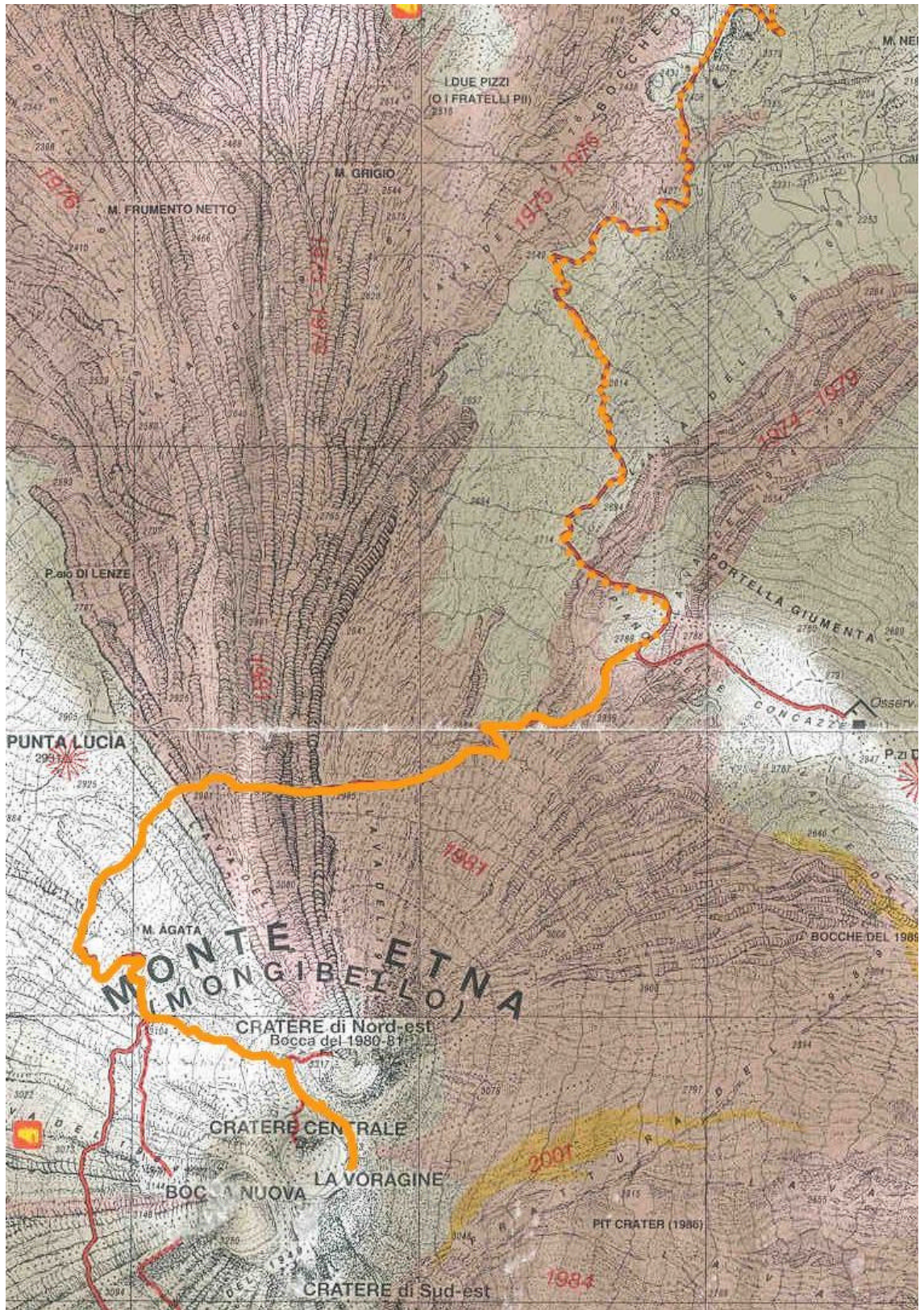
For the descent take the same way you took for the ascent and follow the road to Piano Provenzana. At 2.400m you'll arrive at some prominent lateral craters. This area is very interesting, you can explore several older craters here and will find a couple of lavatunnels. During the further descent, you can shortcut the road as you like if the conditions are fine.

Classification: low, distance 12km. Carry enough water with you.
Base: Piano Provenzana

Marking: the road is easy to follow, but markings do not exist. the trail is not marked at all and its head might be a little hard to find.

Maps:

e.g. "Mt. Etna - carta escursionista altomontana", S.EL.CA. Firenze (1:25.000)
[Map of the tour \(1:25.000\) 340k](#)



Travel Season:

all year (ski tour in winter)

Notes:

As Etna is a very active volcano, the tour described might either not be possible due to actual eruptions or might change its character completely because roads and/or trails destroyed by lava. Anyway, if the conditions are fine, the tour can also be extended to a complete crossing of Etna in a N-S direction towards Rifugio Sapienza. The road followed southwards and will lead you towards the old Rif. Alpino and via the Torre del Filosofo to Rifugio Sapienza.

Links:

- Parco dell'Etna [Official Pages Detail Map](#)
- GVP-USGS - [Weekly Volcanic Activity Report](#)
- [Etna- vista sul Vulcano](#) by poseidon.it
- the [Etna pages](#) by Boris Behnke
- [Webcam Etna](#) - Sorveglianza Visiva
- [Etna pages](#) by Stromboli Online
- another [Etna map collection](#) by Alain

